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Abiodun Odusote

University of Lagos, Akoka, Nigeria, aodusote@unilag.edu.ng

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Nigeria: The Matrix between Fragility of Livelihoods and Conflict

Abiodun Odusote, University of Lagos, Nigeria

Abstract

In recent times, there has been an increased outbreak of conflicts across the globe, particularly in areas experiencing livelihood fragility. Available literature suggests that in a society where livelihoods are threatened, minimal, or non-existent, the people are generally more overwhelmed and prone to violence and conflict. This paper consolidates the available literature on livelihoods and conflict, with the aim of identifying the nexus between the two concepts. The author particularly interrogates the matrix between fragility of livelihoods and armed conflicts, with emphasis on *Boko Haram* and the Niger Delta conflicts. The article notes that there seems to be a large pool of vulnerable citizens from where *Boko Haram* members are continuously being recruited. The article establishes that there is greater fragility of livelihoods in that part of the country, the northern part of Nigeria. The article also engages with the Nigerian legislative framework on livelihoods and concludes that it is grossly deficient. The author further enquires on the nature and context of sustainable livelihoods and conflict management in crisis-prone states. Among the many lessons learned and discussed is that sustainable livelihoods' vulnerabilities have negative consequences, conflict being the prime one. Overall, the article concludes by making recommendations on how various factors and processes which inhibit sustainable livelihoods' fragility can be addressed. The vulnerable members of the society must be given access to participatory, developmental, and sustainable livelihood projects.

Introduction

There has been an increased outbreak of conflicts across the globe, particularly in areas where access to and enjoyment of sustainable livelihoods is minimal or non-existent. This research seeks to highlight the factors that fuel conflicts. The author further investigates the complex relationship between deprivation of livelihoods or fragility of livelihoods and conflict. Under this matrix, one can find a wide variety

of studies, approaches, and analyses. Some studies focus on the effects of conflict on livelihood. Others focus on the linkages between poverty and other non-economic factors and how they combine to exacerbate conflicts. It is, however, generally agreed among scholars that there is a linkage between poverty and conflicts, though divergent views exist as to the nature of the linkage (Onuoha, 2007). Some scholars argue that poverty causes conflict (Gurr, 2005) while others contend that the reverse is the case, while some others assert that poverty indirectly induces conflict (O'Connor, 2004). This article articulates the diverse works in this field by interrogating the many available theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence in this knowledge area. It is hoped that the findings of this research will help in a better understanding of the causes of violence, how violence can be curbed and the role of fragility of livelihoods, and lack of sustainable livelihoods in conflict. These issues are examined in broad terms but with particular emphasis on Nigeria. The article argues that the inability to meet livelihood demands contributes, in no small way, to rising insecurity and conflict across the globe and Africa in particular. Available evidence shows that in Africa, inability to earn a sustainable livelihood has the potential to, and often induces conflict and conflict induces livelihood vulnerabilities (Bello & Odusote, 2013; Brainard & Chollet, 2007).

Among the many lessons learned and discussed is that sustainable livelihoods' vulnerabilities have negative consequences, conflict being the prime. The vulnerable members of the society must be given access to participatory, developmental, and sustainable livelihood projects.

This desk-study research considers and analyses primary and secondary data in the public domain. This article is divided into six sections. This introduction and conceptual clarification is followed by the section that discusses the Nigerian legislative framework and practice on livelihoods. Sections three and four explore the dynamics of livelihoods and conflict from diverse theoretical perspectives. Section five investigates the relationships between lack of sustainable livelihoods and conflict, particularly in relation to the two major contemporary armed conflicts in Nigeria, while section six gives recommendations and conclusion.

Conceptual Clarification

It is beyond the scope of this article to extensively interrogate the existing literature in this field. Rather, the conceptual mapping detailed below will be used as tools that inform the analysis of the matrix between fragility of livelihoods and conflict.

Livelihood

Ellis (1999) defines livelihood as “the activities, the assets, and the access that jointly determine the living gained by an individual or household” (p. 2). Livelihood refers to the means of earning a living, including how to secure food, shelter, water, clothing, and basic medical facilities. Livelihood has been defined as “the ways in which people access and mobilize resources that enable them to pursue goals necessary for their survival and longer-term well-being, and thereby reduce the

vulnerability created and exacerbated by conflict” (Young et al., 2002, p. 11). The focus of this article is particularly more on the livelihoods of the poor and rural dwellers in Nigeria, and Africa at large. This study of livelihoods will assist in understanding dynamics of poverty and poverty alleviation in relation to conflict escalation, conflict de-escalation, and conflict resolution.

Sustainable Livelihood

Sustainable livelihood is a contemporary concept that originated from researchers, donors, and policy makers. It is conceived as a guiding principle to improve the understanding of livelihoods of the poor and rural dwellers, and for the formulation and implementation of developmental policies by governments and donors to improving their livelihoods (Solesbury, 2003). It is a concept that is tailored to identify the poor, identify their opportunities, identify factors limiting their livelihoods and how efforts can be made to provide them means of livelihoods, and overcome poverty in the short term and in the future.

Sustainable livelihood is commonly agreed as consisting of,

. . . the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of livelihood: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels in short and long term. (Chambers & Conway, 1992, p. 7)

The Department for International Development (DFID) (1999) adapts a variant of Chambers and Conway’s definition: “. . . A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base (p. 4).

Fragility

This occurs when individuals or a household has high vulnerability to risk. It refers to the various obstacles that negatively affect the citizenry in the pursuit of livelihoods. In the context of this article, fragility is used interchangeably with vulnerabilities. Fragility is multidimensional, consisting of socio-economic, security, and political dimensions. State fragility is defined as the failure of the state to provide its citizenry with basic support in facilitation of livelihoods, either by choice or by inability. Fragility emerges when individuals or households are faced with threats or shocks to their livelihoods with inadequate capacity to respond. Adverse impacts to livelihood in Nigeria include inclement farming weather, erosion, conflict, destruction of roads, deficient infrastructure, flood, insecurity, and high rates of unemployment; these may result in extreme hardship and abject poverty. A livelihood is perceived as fragile if it lacks the capacity to absorb shocks or stress.

Poverty

There are many definitions of poverty, as well as forms of poverty. The scope of this research will not permit a detailed examination of all, only a few relevant definitions will be considered. Friedmann (1996) perceives poverty as a form of disempowerment that can be viewed from three perspectives: socio-economic, political, and psychological. He explained that socio-economic poverty is deprivation or lack of access to means of livelihood. Politically motivated poverty is induced by lack of political will, focus, and objectives by the state to ameliorate the poverty of the people. Psychological poverty is loss of self-worth and confidence by the people. This manifests in a society that has suffered prolonged deprivation and there is prevalent belief that no matter how hard they try, they will continue to be poor. The manifestation of poverty includes the feelings of shame, anger, depression, and powerlessness, and a feeling of being victimized and isolated (Ijaiya & Umar, 2004).

In the context of this article, Onuoha's (2007) definition will be adopted, poverty refers to "a situation of deprivation in which an individual or group of individuals in a society lack the requisite resources, opportunities or means of livelihood to lead a long, healthy and satisfactory life by being unable to provide for their basic life requirements such as water, food, shelter, clothing, sanitation and a minimum level of education" (p. 5). Poverty is characterized by absence of opportunities for earning a livelihood.

Conflict

Conflict has many dimensions. Forsyth (1990) posits that conflict arises when "the actions or beliefs of one or more members of a group are unacceptable to, and, hence are resisted by one or more groups or members" (p. 354). This definition is inadequate because conflict may also arise from the process of seeking peace, progress, or satisfaction. It may arise from misunderstanding, oppression, or failure to reconcile divergent views, beliefs, and interests. Forms of conflict include: domestic conflicts, family conflicts, intra-personal conflict, social conflicts, religious conflicts, and armed conflicts. The focus of this article is on any conflict that results in hostility, and disturbance of public peace and order; this will include civil strife, wars, arm struggles, insurgency, and terrorism. To Wilson and Hanna (1990) conflict is the "struggle involving ideas, values and/or limited resources" (p. 225). From the above, it can be said that conflict arises from contradictions that occur in social interactions.

Nigerian Legislative Framework and Practice on Livelihoods

A comprehensive legal framework on livelihoods is necessary to provide guidelines on how to address such situations and may also serve as a tool for advocating for, achieving, and the protection of the poor. For example, arguments for access to capitals of sustainable livelihoods can be strengthened by making specific reference to legal obligations. The Nigerian Constitution does not impose on the Nigerian government a legally enforceable obligation to assure or guarantee its citizens livelihood capitals. However, the international human rights law outlines the obligations and the duties of the state to respect, protect, and fulfill social rights. International human rights instruments enable individuals and NGOs to claim and access certain essential capitals necessary to achieve sustainable livelihood and to enable the state to provide support to prevent or absorb vulnerabilities (Sen, 1999; UNDP, 2000). Conway, Moser, Norton, and Farrington (2002) asserted rooting policy in universal basic rights may be the only way to reorient government priorities towards the poor. Basing entitlements in rights rather than discretionary policy makes it easier to defend continuity of service provision, and increasing the political sustainability of pro-poor actions. By guaranteeing a minimum livelihood and discouraging extreme inequalities, enforceable economic and social rights also help to promote the social and political stability necessary for sustainable livelihoods. Relevant provisions of the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to sustainable livelihoods include rights to life, freedom from torture, freedom of movement, etc. The International Covenants on Economic and Social Rights protects the right to food, housing, health, livelihood, and non-discrimination. Rights-based approach to livelihood is important in reducing the vulnerability of the poor by ensuring “a certain minimum standard of economic and social wellbeing, and thus directly and indirectly reducing the magnitude of inequalities visible in society, livelihood-related rights help to contain social tensions which may otherwise result in civil disorder, crime and violence” (Conway, Moser, Norton, & Farrington, 2002, p. 32).

However, human rights approach to livelihood has attracted criticism on the ground that poor states may not be able to afford the huge capital outlays that may be required to provide the basic support for sustainable livelihood. In response to this criticism, Conway, et al. (2002) recommended that states should adopt a selective approach by identifying, protecting, and upholding key rights that underpin sustainable livelihoods. For example, the right to non-discrimination, right to basic health, right to basic labor protections, right to access land and productive resources, and right to education should be protected by all states.

The Dynamics of Livelihoods

Livelihoods deal with the way one earns and accesses the necessities of life, for oneself and one's family. Livelihood is the study of how poor people and rural dwellers create a living for themselves. This includes a wide variety of basic resources such as health, education, food, and shelter. Also, inclusive are ecological

and environmental factors that have the potential of affecting their survival. Accessing these needs is influenced by the *fragility* variables in a society. This takes into account socio-political stability, favorable climate conditions in agrarian society, strife and conflicts, skills, and knowledge acquisition. A negative combination of these factors has implications on how the people access and use their resources to earn a livelihood.

The focus on livelihood approach is the elimination of poverty among poorer nations. A framework has been established to drive this objective and the framework is flexible enough to accommodate various local settings. The framework recognizes the changing views of poverty and the diversity of aspirations, the importance of assets and communities, and the role of constraints provided by institutional structures and processes (Solesbury, 2003). Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) is widely accepted within academia, NGOs, and developmental agencies (Cahn, 2002). A livelihood is sustainable when it can absorb and recover from stresses and shocks (Scoones, 1998). The core principles of this approach include any developmental plan or incentives must be people-oriented and involve inputs from them. SLA approach is holistic; it recognizes a variety of strategies, outcomes, influences, and actors that combine to influence the livelihoods of stakeholders. SLA incorporates dynamism in its attempt to understand and proffer solutions to factors that shape people's lives. SLA identifies an individual's strengths rather than weaknesses. SLA aims to remove constraints for the realization of potentials. SLA builds bridges between the macro and micro levels of a society. Finally, it is committed to the sustainability of livelihoods and varied dimensions. SLA is resilient in the face of challenges, identified as shocks and stresses, including environmental, economic, social, and institutional. These shocks must not be allowed to undermine the livelihood options of others.

Understanding SLA approaches is essential to understanding the livelihoods of the poor, and helps in poverty alleviation. It is essential to diagnosing the causes and effects of poverty. It is also important in the execution of developmental projects to conduct livelihood analysis. A thorough livelihood analysis will reveal why people are poor, limiting factors, shifting/seasonal constraints, and economic shocks. This analysis can be used as a checklist of how developmental activities fit in the livelihood of the poor (Kollmair et al., 2002). SLA can also be used to measure the likely side effects of developmental projects on the poor.

Fragility of livelihood occurs when individuals or households are faced with threats to their means of livelihoods. This may occur when any of the essentials of sustainable livelihoods is threatened, in other words, a constant threat to natural, social, human, physical, or financial capital will increase fragility. To illustrate further, to farmers, violent tides and inclement weather will expose them to vulnerabilities. To employees, high rates of unemployment and corruption will exacerbate fragility. These are harmful shocks that may bring about poverty if not adequately tackled. In sum, fragility occurs when livelihoods are not sustainable, when individuals or social units are open to something undesirable, harmful, or injurious and are inadequately equipped to respond, mitigate, or cope with the risk (Rengasamy, 2008). Fragility of livelihoods connotes the susceptibility and

inability of peoples to withstand negative impacts from stresses and shocks which they are exposed to. Rengasamy (2008) categorized risks that have the potential to exacerbate fragility into four:

- i. Harmful trends, such as increasing soil erosion, frequent droughts, increasing incidence of HIV/AIDS, unfavorable development of commodity or input prices, etc.
- ii. Shocks such as earthquakes, floods, disease, loss of jobs, violent conflicts, destruction of physical infrastructure (such as roads, bridges), etc.
- iii. Harmful seasonal fluctuations, such as price fluctuations in crop and livestock markets, fluctuations in food availability due to seasonal climatic changes, etc.
- iv. Unfavorable socio-political environments, characterized by absence of rule of law, deprivation of rights, gender related discrimination, etc.

The prevalence of the above stresses and shocks in any society have the potential of inducing poverty. A society without food security, access to education, access to clean water, basic income, and capital of production will experience abject poverty. Government must ensure that an adequate framework is put in place to prevent, absorb, or ameliorate the occurrence of any of the factors identified above.

Proper understanding of fragility is essential to the study of how poverty can be assessed and effectively curtailed. Poverty is the lack of sustainable livelihood. Hence, in the later segment of this article, the relationship between poverty and conflict will be investigated.

The Dynamics of Conflict

A state of conflict exists when there is a disagreement or hostility between opposing parties (Nicholson, 1992). Oftentimes, it involves the deployment of arms and ammunition. Conflict has diverse conceptual connotations. Among many types of conflict that have been identified are: intra-personal, inter-personal, family conflict, inter-group conflict, intra-state, inter-state, and global conflict (Folarin, 2013). Folarin identified forms of conflict to include arm struggle, war, revolution, terrorism, mutiny, protest, and insurgency. Interrogation in this study covers any conflict that evokes disharmony, struggle, strife, hostility, contest, battle, and war with the aim of assessing the common pattern of conflicts, and seeking the nexus between lack of sustainable livelihoods and conflict. Available literature suggests that livelihood is related to conflict because of the underlying effect of inequality, discrimination, deprivation, and marginalization on the psyche of the people (Humphrey, 2002). This will in turn aid how to effectively deal with rising conflicts across the globe.

Theoretical Perspectives on Conflict

There are many theories put forward to explain the causes of conflict. Some of the relevant theories that have identified the causes of conflict, explained, and inspired concrete policy proposals that try to minimize conflict, are set out below:

The Marxist theory of conflict: Proponents of this school of thought proceed on the assumption that there exist two unequal classes of people in the society. On one hand, there exist the rich, powerful, and noble; on the other hand exist, the poor, socially excluded, and deflated, identified as the proletariat. The former controls the livelihoods of the latter. The Marxist contend that by reason of this inequality, the society is set up to be in a state of perpetual conflict, the poor will always agitate for equality and survival (Lenin, 1917). The pursuit of group respective divergent interests often leads to disagreement, misunderstanding, and conflicts.

The economic theory of conflict: This school of thought explains the link between economic deprivation and conflict (Dube & Vargas, 2013). They contend that because many people compete for scarce and limited economic resources, there is bound to be conflict when a group is threatened with lack or scarcity of livelihoods (Bazzi & Blattman, 2013). They further argue that the threat of, or perceived threat of, deprivation of farmlands and grazing lands are often the causes of conflict in agrarian societies. In other societies, perceived interference with resource control or source of livelihoods often propel conflicts.

The frustration and aggression theory of conflict: The underlying thesis of this school of thought is that bottled frustration is a major source of conflict (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939). A feeling of frustration is a feeling of disappointment. This school suggests that individuals become more aggressive when they perceive obstacles to their success (Goor et al., 1996). This theory contends that when individuals or group are not given access to livelihoods or are constantly being deprived of livelihoods for no justifiable reasons, they are bound to react with anger and aggression, which will invariably lead to conflict (Berkowitz, 1969). For example, the continued violation of the farming lands of the Ogoni people, through oil exploration, has always been a cause of frequent conflict. The communities contend that the multinational oil companies and the Nigerian government have been exploiting their oil wealth and in the process, destroying their farmland and other elements of livelihoods. They were aggrieved because they were not adequately compensated. Their youths were hungry and unemployed. In this situation, conflict emerged. They vandalized oil pipelines, kidnapped oil expatriates, and destroyed oil-drilling facilities. It is argued that conflict emerges when one group perceives its goals and aspirations are being blocked by another group (Gurr, 1970; Salem, 1993).

The relative deprivation theory of conflict: The relative deprivation theory is closely associated with the Frustration and Aggression theory. Gurr (2005) argues

that poverty and marginalization within countries are breeding grounds for violent political movements and terrorism. The theory contends that people often perceive themselves to be deprived in comparison with others. This perception creates inter-group hostility. These theories are germane in highlighting the nexus between lack of livelihoods and conflict. When people hold others accountable for their inability to access sustainable livelihoods, they rebel against the perceived enemy. This is true of the Nigerian Niger Delta crisis and the *Boko Haram* conflicts. Agbiboa (2013) observed that, “many of the members attracted by *Boko Haram* are animated by deep-seated socioeconomic and political grievances, such as poor governance and elite corruption” (p. 19) and because of fragility of livelihoods in the northeastern Nigeria, the dreaded group enjoy sympathy and protection among the generality of the impoverished and alienated people of the region (Campbell, 2012). Scholars generally agreed that deprivation of livelihoods of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta by the multi-national oil companies through oil exploration, environmental degradation, perceived insensitivity of the state, and pollution of rivers and farmlands was the cause of the Niger Delta crisis (Agbiboa, 2013). Consequently, people whose main vocations are farming and fishing have been deprived of their primary means of earning a livelihood. These have led to various forms of violence and conflicts including arson, kidnapping, and vandalism of oil installation.

The structural theory of conflict and the institutional theory of conflict: In explaining the causes of conflict these schools of thought argue that conflict is inherent in the way societies are structured. The causation of conflict is traceable to the tension generated when people compete for scarce resources. It is argued that social exclusion, discrimination, inequalities, and economic deprivation are among many factors that can generate conflict in the society (Oakland, 2005). The institutional theory stresses that a combination of lack of opportunity to redress grievances, high level of segregation and discrimination, irresponsible judicial system, and low capacity or lack of mechanisms for dispute resolution inadvertently make conflict inevitable. A society that lacks an effective institutional approach to grievance resolution is prone to conflict. There must be effective policing, law enforcement, rule of law, electoral system, and judicial system, otherwise aggrieved individuals will resort to violence and conflict (Murshed & Tadjoeeddin, 2007; Stewart, 2003).

Relationships between Lack of Sustainable Livelihoods and Conflict

Poverty deprives people of the freedom to decide over and shape their own lives; it robs them of the opportunity to choose on matters of fundamental importance to themselves. Lack of power and choice and lack of material resources form the essence of poverty. . . Power, opportunities and security and the lack of them are closely linked. Empowerment and opportunities can reduce insecurity. (Sida, 2002, p. 7)

What is the relationship between poverty and conflict? Are they correlated? To what extent does poverty induce conflict? How does poverty induce conflict? The relationship between deprivation of livelihoods and conflict is multi-dimensional and complex (Goodhand, 2001). Scholars provide different answers to these questions.

On the one hand, some scholars dismissed the link between poverty and conflict. They contend that poverty can only lead to conflict when other non-economic factors are present (Collier & Hoeffler, 1998; Connor 1994; Esman, 1994; Nelson, 1998). Others have argued that multiple factors converge to induce conflict, including ethnic composition and political decay (Humphreys, 2002; Murshed, 2007). Esman (1994) further argued that to attribute major conflicts to economic deprivations, inequalities, or unemployment is to trivialize and distort the stake of the struggles. Cramer (2001) also questioned the link between poverty and conflict, and the poor quality of available data suggesting a link between poverty and conflict. They contend that greed and primitive hunger for wealth accumulation, rather than grievance, tend to cause violent conflict.

On the other hand, scholars have also established, through theoretical and empirical analysis, that there is a link between deprivation of livelihood and conflict. They argue that perennial inequalities, social exclusion, scarcity of resources, religious strife, and poverty have destabilizing effects on the society (Esteban & Ray, 1998; Hirschleifer, 1995). This point is best understood in relation to the unending strife and conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa, which remains one of the poorest regions of the world. The relationship between poverty and conflict is evidenced in this part of the world. Social and economic deprivations, lack of sustainable livelihoods, and inequalities are commonplace in Sub-Saharan Africa, and so is conflict (Austin, 1999). In support of this view, Attwood (2005) observed a strong correlation between lack of sustainable livelihoods, fragility, and the potential for violence.

Underpinning this assertion is the theory that failure to satisfy basic needs of life is a platform for conflict (Burton, 1996a, pp. 7-10; Burton, 1997, pp. 32-40). Burton identified human basic needs to include the physiological needs of development, identity, and consistency. In Burton's reasoning, human needs will be pursued by individuals and groups regardless of the consequences. The platform for conflict becomes activated when the means of sustaining the basic needs are threatened or non-existent. Frustration to meet the basic needs (known in contemporary terms as livelihoods) leads to dejection and a feeling of powerlessness. This feeling of dejection generates deviant behavioral dysfunction in individuals and groups with similar feelings of hopelessness. This condition consequently creates the aspiration to restore psychic equilibrium (Agoha, 2013). Hence, individuals and groups choose an alternative path that is deemed necessary to facilitate and sustain their well-being. This often brings groups in conflict with other groups. For example, there seems to be a large pool of rebels from where *Boko Haram* members are being recruited. What are the reasons for this? There are more than a few reasons that may not fall within the scope of this article. Research has

however established that many young people do not have a stake in the society (Ahokegh, 2012). They are jobless and have no hope of enjoying sustainable livelihood. And suddenly, they are invited to join the *Boko Haram* group with a promise of food, shelter, power, and comradeship. Collier (1999) observed, “if young men face only the option of poverty, they might be more inclined to join a rebellion” (p. 3). This proposition strengthens the deprivation theory of conflict discussed above.

Boko Haram exists predominantly in the northeast of Nigeria. A close look at the livelihoods of the inhabitants of the northeast of Nigeria will reveal a correlation between poverty and conflict. It is generally agreed by scholars that there is poverty in Nigeria. However, greater poverty exists in the northeast of Nigeria. The abject poverty in the northeast of Nigeria, abysmally low levels of literacy, as well as the feeling of insecurity combine to provide a safe haven and human resources for *Boko Haram* (Ahokegh, 2012). The level of disillusionment and discontent in this part of the country is higher than any other part. This part of the country has the highest poverty rate in the country, the highest level of unemployment in the country, and the highest proportion of children of school age out of school. *Boko Haram* feeds on this discontent. The United Kingdom Department for International Development’s (DFID) framework on livelihoods is completely absent in this part of the country. The residents live in a very poor condition characterized by the lack of access to shelter, formal education, food, and healthcare.

Available literature further suggests that deprivation of or failure to access basic amenities of life, such as food, shelter, housing and medical facilities, promote a feeling of insecurity and hopelessness (Mustapha, 2015). These feelings invariably evoke violence and conflict among some of the people (Mustapha, 2015). For example, the Niger Delta militants perceive the oil exploration activities of the multinational oil companies as detrimental to their farming and economic interests. This has caused several conflicts between the oil drilling companies and the Niger Delta militants. Drawing from the analysis of the institutional theory and how the lack of effective dispute resolution mechanisms may induce conflict, this article now seeks to interrogate how the lack of effective dispute resolution mechanisms have contributed to the Nigerian Niger Delta crisis.

The Niger Delta communities have previously attempted to ventilate their anger and aggression through many forms of civil and peaceful resolution mechanisms to no effect (Saliu, Luqman, & Abdullahi, 2007). Ken Saro-Wiwa and other major activists of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) were executed by a military tribunal. The Movement was established to advocate for the control and use of the resources in the oil-rich communities to enhance the sustainable livelihoods of the inhabitants. There was obvious dearth of conflict resolution mechanisms to ameliorate their perceived maltreatment and exclusion. The Niger Delta communities appeared not to be a priority for the state to protect. Against this background there was looting, arson, kidnapping, and destruction of property. Victims of crime were apprehensive and failed to seek justice because of the failure of the justice system to prosecute and punish the identified violators (Human Rights Watch, 2004). There was prevalence of abject

poverty, low income per capita, and concentration of wealth in the hands of a few elites perceived to have betrayed the communities, weak enforcement system, low conflict resolution capacity, and high tolerance for deviant behavior. These conditions set the stage for the violent armed conflict that was to follow. There was a massive armed conflict in the region for several years until a significant part of their grievances and demands were met. This singular conflict provides empirical evidence in support of the institutional theory of conflict and the frustration and aggression theory of conflict.

The Niger Delta conflict may also be explained with the application of the greed and grievance theory. The greed and grievance theory are differing arguments by scholars on the causes of armed conflicts. This theory can be applied to the Niger Delta conflict. The proponents of the greed theory argue that rebels are motivated by the desire to better their situation (Collier & Hoeffler, 2000). They argue that it is the desire for self-enrichment that causes conflict. Combatants will join the conflict if the benefit of joining the conflict outweighs the disadvantage of not joining. The argument that people rebel over identity, ethnicity, and class rather than economics underpins the grievance theory (Keen, 2000). This school of thought argues that conflict may be prolonged because of the desire to retain power and not because of the desire for self-enrichment. Keen argues that greed generates grievances and rebellion but greed cannot solely explain a conflict. In relation to the Niger Delta conflict there are multiple causes of the conflict (Folarin, 2013). The greed theory applies to a certain extent. Allegations of greed and corrupt practices have been levied against some of the leaders of the rebellion (Onuoha, 2007). However, to argue that the conflict was exacerbated solely because of greed is to show little understanding of the complexities of the conflict and the nature of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta area (Agoha, 2013). The primary cause of the Niger Delta conflict is socio-economic exclusion and environmental degradation of the local oil producing communities (Salau, Luqman, & Abdullahi, 2007). As a result of exploration and environmental degradation, the locals have been deprived of access to their livelihoods. This deprivation was the primary reason for the Niger Delta conflict. The grievance theory appears more appropriate in explaining the Niger Delta conflict. There was genuine grievance based on social exclusion and environmental degradation (Onuoha, 2007).

It has also been established that life is cheap in areas experiencing deprivation of livelihoods. Less importance is attached to human lives in such deprived neighborhoods. Inhabitants are generally short-tempered, easily provoked, and amenable to violence and conflict (Abass, 2010). Where arms and ammunition are not available, such people are willing to fight at the slightest provocation, even, with their bare fists. Gareth (1999) provides empirical evidence in support of this view. It is shown that during the Nigerian recession of the 1970s, many young Nigerians were unemployed and this tremendously induced poverty. There was rapid economic regression. These conditions preceded and induced the Maitatsine conflict of that era. The Maitatsine conflict was one of the most violent religious conflicts Nigeria has ever experienced.

It is generally agreed among scholars that ghettos and downtown settlements are more prone to violence and conflicts. It is beyond coincidence that conflicts across the globe affects more than proportionally the poor, rural populations, and isolated and disconnected areas. For example, it is generally agreed that there is poverty in Nigeria. Greater poverty exists in northern Nigeria. For example, the *Boko Haram* crisis and the Niger Delta crisis are predominantly domiciled among the poor and the rural dwellers. These communities have experienced economic exclusion and inequality since the colonial days. The African Development Bank (ADB) also provides empirical evidence to suggest that fragile economies are more disproportionately likely to be affected by conflict. It observes that “almost 80 percent (15 out of 19) of African fragile states have experienced armed conflict in the last 20 years, with 11 countries experiencing armed conflicts in the last 10 years” (ADB, 2014, p. 8).

Empirical Analysis of a Complex Relationship

In Nigeria, a large number of citizens live at the lowest international levels of poverty. The recent rebasing of the Nigerian GDP notwithstanding, 55% of the population live on less than one dollar a day (NBS, 2010) and this meager sum is insufficient to earn a livelihood. Some of the significant problems in Nigeria include insecurity, conflict, illiteracy, unemployment, lack of access to basic healthcare facilities, and lack of access to shelter. These problems are most pronounced in the northeastern and the south-southern Nigeria. The former is home to *Boko Haram*, while the latter is home to the Niger-Delta crisis. The irony of Nigeria’s Niger Delta region is that the region has one of the largest oil reserves in the world (Aluko, 2004). However, it also hosts one of the poorest sets of people in the world (Saliu, 2007). Poverty exists in the midst of riches and abundance. The majority of the inhabitants of the region live in slums and shanties; unemployment is rife and illiteracy is prevalent (Gareth, 1999). As mentioned earlier, oil exploration has cost the inhabitants dearly. In a field research by Aluko (2004), his findings reveal that 95.8% of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta are of the opinion “that oil exploitation and the environmental degradation that accompanied it, is largely responsible for their impoverishment which denied them of their primary source of livelihoods” (p. 66). Sharing of oil revenue has also fostered a feeling of inequality and segregation. Inability of the governments to translate earned oil revenue to sustainable growth and improved livelihood has festered the feeling of resentments among the inhabitants against the governments, resulting in violence and conflicts. There is obvious failure of accountability and transparency in governance, and governments have failed to apply oil revenues to alleviate the sufferings of the people. Fragility of livelihoods in these regions has been ignored for too long. The high rate of illiteracy and economic backwardness has made many inhabitants skeptical about a system and democracy that have brought them little or no benefits. Given these scenarios, it is easy to appreciate why the army of unemployed and disenfranchised youths will easily embrace *Boko Haram* that will offer them better livelihoods and provide them the platform to attack a detested system (Onuoha, 2010).

In Borno State, one of the predominant *Boko Haram* states, “only 2% of children under 25 months have been vaccinated; 83% of young people are illiterate; 48.5% of children do not go to school” (Rogers, 2012, p. 3).

Table 1: Regional Incidence of Poverty by Different Poverty Measures in Nigeria

Zone/Region	Food Poor	Absolute Poor	Relative Poor	A Dollar Poor
North Central	38.6	59.5	67.5	59.7
Northeast	51.5	69.0	76.3	69.1
Northwest	51.8	70.0	77.7	70.4
Southeast	41.8	58.7	67.0	59.2
South-South	35.5	55.9	63.8	56.1
Southwest	25.4	49.2	59.1	50.1

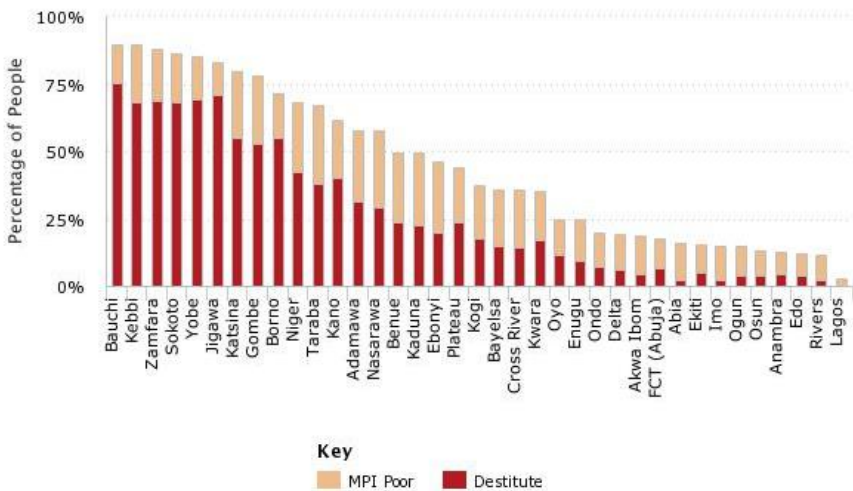
Source: Ikelegbe, (2012); Omoh (2012) quoting Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, p.19.

The above table shows that Nigeria is rated as one of the poorest economies of the world. Majority of its inhabitants live on less than one dollar per day. Amidst this poverty, greater and excruciating poverty exist in the north-central, northeast, and northwest Nigeria. *Boko-Haram* resides and operates in that part of Nigeria. Prior to the *Boko Haram* crisis, that part of the country has experienced frequent violence and conflict. From the above table, over 70% of the inhabitants of the northeast and northwest live in abject poverty. The people feel victimized and disenchanting and are willing to take to violence against the state at the slightest provocation (Herskovits, 2012). This correlates with the frustration and aggression and the relative deprivation theories of conflict discussed above. Similarly, Alozieuwa (2012), reflecting on the body of empirical evidence available to him, expressed a corroborating view in his research, in noting that,

... Professor Jean Herskovits of the State University of New York, to whom “it was clear in 2009 when the insurgency began that the root cause of violence and anger in both the north and south of Nigeria is endemic poverty and hopelessness,” the government must address socio-economic deprivation, which is most severe in the north (Herskovits, 2012). Indeed the very high incident of poverty in Nigeria is generally seen as a northern phenomenon. A study by Professor Charles Soludo shows the three northern regions having an average poverty incidence of 70.1% compared to 34.9% of the south’s three. Ten states in Nigeria with the highest incidence of poverty also are all northern states, whereas the 10 states with the lowest incidence of poverty are all southern states (Lukman, n.d.). Thus, “70% of the people living in the north live below \$1 per day, which is equivalent to N129 per day” (Lukman, n.d.). The high conflict potential of the developing areas could indeed be a function of frustration caused by economic deprivation (Dougherty & Pfaltzgrate, Jr., 1990, p. 266).

Burton (1984, 1997) argues that human needs do not ordinarily lead to conflict, rather, conflict emerges from the frustration caused by unfulfilled needs. According to Burton, institutional arrangements of a society may influence conflict. Burton's theory insinuates that dysfunctional conflicts and deviant behavior are signs of something else. Conflict is a sign of structural failings, the failures of a nation to provide for the needs of its citizens (Burton, 1984, 1997). Burton argues that conflict can be found in every day human relations but conflict must not be allowed to be dysfunctional. Conflict must be controlled to avoid perversions that are destructive of human enjoyment. Burton's theory applies to the *Boko Haram* conflict in Nigeria. The crisis is a symptom of institutional socio-economic neglect of northeastern Nigeria.

Figure I: Headcount Ratio of the MPI Poor and Destitute in Nigeria



Source: Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) Country Briefing (2014).

The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) 2014 report reveals the extent of poverty in the northeastern part of Nigeria where the *Boko Haram* insurgency is raging. The figure above shows that Bauchi State has the highest percentage of people living in extreme poverty in Nigeria. The report which measured multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) for Nigeria also noted that 19.3% of the population remained vulnerable to poverty. Fragility of livelihoods is quite high in Nigeria. This report takes into consideration depravity in livelihoods capitals in at least one-third of the weighted indicators, including access to education, school

attendance, child mortality, shelter, sanitation, water, food, cooking, fuel, and assets.

From the data and analysis, we can surmise that aside from poverty, the northeastern part of Nigeria has experienced extended periods of livelihoods' vulnerability challenges. The residents are susceptible to physical and emotional harms from diverse threats. They have limited or no access to education, basic healthcare facilities, sanitary facilities, shelter, and financial assistance. They also often suffer from poor harvests because of unfavorable weather conditions and lack of farming technological know-how. Hence, they suffer from low social status coupled with a feeling of hopelessness. Based on the analysis above, there appears to be a solid link between poverty rates and conflict in Nigeria. Though direct causation remains elusive, correlation certainly exists and warrants further exploration.

Conclusion

This article has shown that there exist a relationship between fragility of livelihoods, lack of livelihoods, and conflict. All the various theories of conflict considered above have established a correlation between deprivation or lack of access to livelihoods and conflict. The empirical evidence presented above has also shown how real and perceived deprivations of livelihoods have contributed to the Niger Delta struggle and that poverty has a role to play in the *Boko Haram* conflict. Various studies by the African Development Bank, the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, and the recent Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative presented above also demonstrated and confirmed the correlation between fragility of livelihood and poverty. Researchers considered and presented above have also shown that scholars disagree that poverty exclusively causes conflict. However, all the scholars are in agreement that oftentimes poverty is one of the causes of conflict. This article does not contend that all conflicts are inspired by poverty and neither does it assert that, at all times, poverty leads to conflict. The thesis is that when people have a feeling of being oppressed, victimized, segregated, or discriminated against, and not able to access livelihoods capitals, the deprivation/aggression theory will always come to play. This is corroborated by the Niger Delta crisis, the recourse to violence by the Niger-Delta youths is because of governments' insensitivity to their plights and their many protests. Evidence presented above showed that the crisis abated when governments met the demands of the Niger Delta youths and presented them the opportunities to earn their livelihoods through the amnesty program.

From the above analysis, it is obvious that continued apathy to the poor and the voiceless have grave implications for national security. The article has shown that such treatment of the vulnerable oftentimes exacerbates conflict. From the Nigerian experience, this article has shown that dealing with and resolving increased conflicts across the globe must be handled with great caution and understanding of the underlying factors underpinning the conflicts. Preventing and curbing the spread of conflict demands new thinking, solutions, and strategies. This research suggests

that governments across the globe should focus on and remedy various factors and processes which constrain access to sustainable livelihoods by the poor and the ethnic minorities. This research finding indicates that policy of affirmation and national integration must be aggressively pursued to appease aggrieved groups. This will minimize armed conflict. The most vulnerable in the society should be given access to choice and opportunities to sustainable livelihoods.

To increase access to livelihoods and reduce poverty, governments and donors should pursue poverty eradication policies after a due diligence on sustainable livelihoods of any particular society. To instill resilience and achieve sustainable livelihoods, governments across African states must address the causes of fragility. Seed capital should be provided for entrepreneurs, agriculture and farming should be encouraged and government must provide assistance, and quality education must be provided free and made compulsory at the primary and secondary school levels. Factors that promote violence should be dealt with, and segregation, all forms of inequalities, and exclusion should be addressed.

To corroborate the institutional theory discussed above, the Nigerian government and governments across the developing countries should place premium on the establishment and sustenance of credible, efficient, and independent criminal justice institutions. Perpetrators of violence should be investigated, arrested, and brought to justice within a reasonable time. The police should be adequately equipped, structured, and motivated to deliver. The court system and rules of court should be revised to be responsive to contemporary challenges. When perpetrators of crimes are brought to book, it sends a very strong signal of deterrence to other potential imitators and sympathizers of armed groups, otherwise, violence will foster more violence as with *Boko Haram*.

It is also important for governments to establish other informal bodies that may hear grievances and settle disputes in a non-adversarial manner. Reconciliation bodies, arbitral panels, and other dispute settling mechanism should be set up to address institutional, age-long, and contemporary grievances. This will promote reconciliation and peaceful co-existence among diverse ethnic and religious groups. In Nigeria, the Niger Delta crisis was significantly resolved and the violence curbed through negotiation. The federal government granted amnesty to the various Niger Delta armed groups. The government met some of their grievances by sending a good number of unemployed youths abroad for training, employed a good number, and offered some others lucrative contracts. Governments also embarked on major infrastructural developments in the region.

In conclusion, the provisions of Chapter 2 of the Nigerian Constitution on the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy have the potentials to repair fragility of livelihoods. However, because they are mere ideals and aspirations to guide organs and agencies of governments in the performance of their duties, they have not been engaged to fulfill their potentials. They do not confer any legal right and remedy. These provisions confer obligations on government to provide security and welfare to embrace national integration and discourage all forms of discriminations. Chapter 2 further encourages inter-marriage between diverse ethnic and religious groups, abolition of corrupt practices, enforcement of

the rule of law, promotion of an efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy to include distribution of wealth and livelihoods. Quality education should be free and compulsory at the primary and secondary school levels, and the environment should be protected, improved, and water, air, land, forest, and wildlife of Nigeria should be safeguarded. Nigerian governments have failed to conform to these ideals because they are not enforceable rights. These noble objectives and principles have been ignored by governments. They have pursued contrary objectives; corruption, segregation, favoritism, and injustice have been embraced. Aggrieved citizens could not challenge the failure of government to provide for them in a court of law, hence, many resorted to violence and conflict. It is proposed that some of the provisions of Chapter 2 be made enforceable in a court of law so that aggrieved groups will have the opportunity to ventilate their grievances.

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